

**U.S. Department of Justice**

*United States Attorney*

*Eastern District of Virginia*

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*Paul J. McNulty*  
*United States Attorney*

*2100 Jamieson Avenue (703)299-3700*  
*Alexandria, Virginia 22314 Fax: 703-549-5202*

**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**For further information contact**  
**Sam Dibbley 703-299-3822**

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that Thomas P. Sanderson, 31, of Burke, Virginia, pled guilty today to a criminal information charging him with one count of exceeding authorized access to a computer used in interstate commerce with intent to defraud. He entered his plea before United States District Judge T.S. Ellis, III, in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia. Judge Ellis set Sanderson's sentencing for April 11, 2003, at which time he faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment and a maximum fine of \$250,000. Sanderson has already made full restitution.

In pleading guilty, Sanderson admitted that, beginning in February 2002 he offered numerous items for sale on the Internet website eBay and in e-mail messages directed at eBay bidders. Sanderson, however, never owned the items. These items included a "Sarah Hughes Signed Figure Skate" and a "US Flag Signed by 3 Shea Generations," both of which had been offered for sale through eBay by the charity Olympic Aid. Sanderson, using his access to eBay's computers, contacted disappointed bidders in the Olympic Aid auctions, claimed that the high bidders had "backed out" and offered to sell the items for the winning bid price. In order to appear to be an Olympic Aid official, Sanderson registered the domain name "Olympic-Aid.com" and sent his messages from addresses such as "FrankO'Hare@Olympic-Aid.com."

Olympic Aid is an international charity affiliated with the International Olympic Committee and based in Toronto, Canada. Olympic Aid describes itself as "an athlete-driven humanitarian non-profit organization using sport and play to enhance child development and build community capacity." The eBay website is a popular on-line marketplace that enables people to auction or trade goods. According to eBay, there are 46.1 million registered users of its services. In 2000, more than \$5 billion in goods were traded on eBay's website.

This case was investigated by the Washington Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michael J. Elston of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

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